

# IMPOSSIBLE ESCAPES

EVASIVE STRATEGIES, ELUSIVE PROCEDURES & EVACUATION PLANS

In 1919, Gabriele D'Annunzio decided to capture the city of Fiume from Yugoslavia and give it to Italy. Italy turned down his generous offer, the Italian Minister publicly calling him a fool. Instead of giving it back, D'Annunzio decided to declare independence and see how long he could get away with it. He wrote a constitution that declared music to be the central principle of his new state, the Italian Regency of Carnaro. Each morning D'Annunzio would recite poetry and manifesto from his balcony and each evening there was a concert and fireworks, constituting the main activities of government.



In 2014, an American dad claimed a tiny parcel of African land to fill his daughter's wish to become a princess. After making the arduous trek to Bir Tawil and planting a flag, he proclaimed on his Facebook page "that Bir Tawil shall be forever known as the Kingdom of North Sudan. The Kingdom is established as a sovereign monarchy with myself as the head of state; with Emily becoming an actual princess." Bir Tawil, an 800-square-mile piece of land sandwiched in between Egypt and Sudan, is currently under no country's jurisdiction. It's neighbouring countries have renounced any claim to it in response to an addendum to the treaty of 1899, which allots Hala'ib, an area abutting the red sea, to Sudan in exchange for the much smaller area of the Bahratanga mountain, now called Bir Tawil. After a Canadian oil company announced plans to acquire drilling rights for the waters bordering Hala'ib both Egypt and Sudan claimed the area and renounced sovereignty over Bir Tawil in exchange. After launching an unsuccessful global crowdfunding campaign to turn his Kingdom of North Sudan into a cutting-edge science & technology hub, Jeremiah Heaton was accused of 21st century imperialism and sold the rights to his story to Disney for an undisclosed fee.

NO WONDER THAT IT HAD BECOME SO DIFFICULT FOR THE MODERNS TO GET A HOLD OF IT. HEAT STOPPED MOVING, AND THE SCENT OF NOTHING BUT THE HEAVY BREATH OF MEAT HUMANS ARE ATTACHED TO THE HUMANS FROM WHICH THEY NEVER ESCAPED. "EARTHBOUND" IS A TERM THAT APPLIES TO ALL MENHUMAN. — BRUNO LATOUR

In 1992, the Austrian psychoanalyst-turned-bioenergetic Wilhelm Reich began initial experimentation with an apparatus called cloudbuster, which used copper bars to concentrate and channel the weak attracting force of water flowing at its base towards the sky in order to release stagnant atmospheric energies and initiate rainfall. Initially, Reich imagined the cloudbuster to reverse the negative atmospheric effects of his earlier experiments with nuclear energy, but eventually used it to fight droughts or save a local children's parade from drowning in heavy rain. From 17-22 July 1993, one of Reich's cloudbuster operations close to his laboratory in Ranglefeld, Maine, failed. On 23 July 1993, a million-dollar rain soaks the city of New York and ends a long heat wave. Field fruits and lawn areas in the vicinity of the city remained unwatered, at least preliminarily, but the floods put thousands of cellars under water, brought hundreds of cars to a standstill, blocked the subway-traffic; a man drowned in two feet deep water on the roof of a Five-story building.

## ESCAPE CLIMATE

Resilience is the ability to recover quickly after a shock, it reflects a time delta that measures how long after such a shock we remain incapacitated. Resilience is a key word in current discourses on climate change adaptation. We elevate cities, develop storm-water tunnels, design flood zones. When the water comes up to us, we will float on its nucleus. We read hopeful lists of "places to visit before they're lost to climate change", and give out awards for "the best cities to address climate change". Times names the nine best places to live in order to escape the harshest effects of global ecosystem instabilities. Climate change is like a new set of design constraints for an earth-scale design competition – a veritable playground for architects, geo-engineers, planners and insurance industries plying a trade in the means and modes of dealing and living with new, disastrous fronts and climatological catastrophe.

WHEN YOU FEEL RAINDROPS FALLING ON YOUR HEAD, YOU ARE EXPERIENCING CLIMATE. IN SOME SENSE, IN PARTICULAR YOU ARE EXPERIENCING THE CLIMATE CHANGE THAT IS GOING ON AROUND YOU, BUT YOU ARE NEVER DIRECTLY EXPERIENCING GLOBAL WARMING AS SUCH. (...) BUT GLOBAL WARMING IS AS REAL AS THIS SENTENCE. NOT ONLY THAT, IT IS VISCIOUS. IT NEVER STOPS STICKING TO YOU, NO MATTER WHERE YOU MOVE ON THE PLANET. — TIMOTHY MORTON

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YVONNE VOLKART, FLAVIA CAVALIERE, JOHANNES BRUDER, MORITZ GREENER-PETTER, SHINTARO MIYAZAKI, JAMIE ALLEN WITH PAOLO PATRELLI, GIUDITTA VENDRAMO, LEANNE WIJNSMA SPECIAL THANKS TO SARAH SHARMA

On 18 December 2011, a man known only as Peter, who had decided to escape from society for christians, was found hibernating in a car parked in the woods outside of the city of Usak in Northern Sweden. Provisioned with a considerable amount of food, alcohol and cigarettes, he had driven his car towards the great outdoors to avoid all the jolly that typically surrounds the end of the year. Even when his provisions ran out – food first, then alcohol and cigarettes – he decided to stay put. Out in the forest, trapped in his car and deprived of the comforts of civilization, Peter's mind remained locked in a refusal of society. On 17 February 2011, Peter is brought to a hospital in Usak.

## ESCAPE HISTORY

Announced by so many, from Barthes to Fukuyama, "the end of history" tends to arrive and re-arrive. And with each exit, with each end, we suffer delusions, various kinds of liberal fantasies wrought, for example, by the technological, the digital – reconfigured means of authorship and creation that never achieve the paradigmatic change we hope for when we weather their birthing pangs. Shall we abandon *terra nullius* and regard instead an afterlife for history? Shall we remembrance of historical being in the world that is never new, always prefigured? There never was nothing.

In 2016, Thomas Thwaites undertook an artistic intervention into the lives and environments more typically occupied by goats. The project – art and publication – "What next? How I took a Holiday From Being Human", released in that same year, charted Thwaites' attempts at building external appendages and technologies, developing lifestyle changes and social relations (such as sleeping and living with an alpine goat herd) in order to tend away from his own humanness, toward 'goatness'.



## ESCAPE HUMAN

Unforeseen and unforeseeable effects would seem to threaten our definition of what it means to be a human being. We are losing our perceived dominance of Earth at times purposefully enacting our own self-extinction, while extinguishing other species that cannot survive a world we rapidly change. We shall have to adapt, or rather our adaption, our mutation, is already underway. There is little to decide, little re-mission, little option to be always already part of ongoing transformations, technological, ecological, biological. Do we want to become more, or less, alien than we already are? Embracing new post-human beginnings involves halting privilege and relaxing the suffocating grip we have come to have on this world. In learning to let go of humanity, how might we become yet still more, yet ever more, human?

TaskRabbit and Handy.com are online and mobile marketplace that attempt to liberate its users from nine-to-five as a form of ongoing transformations, technological, ecological, biological. Do we want to become more, or less, alien than we already are? Embracing new post-human beginnings involves halting privilege and relaxing the suffocating grip we have come to have on this world. In learning to let go of humanity, how might we become yet still more, yet ever more, human?

## ESCAPE WORK

The British Anthropologist Alfred Gell wrote of the relation between technology and labour that explained magic in terms of 'workless' technological miracle. A technology that enables effortless effectivity gives us one definition of what is magical, as intention, energy and temporal processes that are bypassed. Automation remains magical – those processes we used to call 'manual' remain, and automatism. "The major concept of the modern objects mechanistic triumphalism, the ideal of its mythology" (Baudrillard) is nowhere to be found. Work remains "heteromatic" (Latour), that is, a set of automatic realities, practices and materials that keep life and its technologies afloat. What use is a life without work, anyway? Gilbert Simondon writes in a similar vein, "a purely automatic machine closed in on itself in a predetermined operation could only give summary results."

THE BELIEF THAT TECHNOLOGY WAS SUPPOSED TO BRING FREEDOM FROM LABOR. BUT INSTEAD, TECHNOLOGY HAS BECOME A FORM OF OPPRESSION. EVERY DAY, WE ARE ALL CHAINED TO FACTORY MACHINES. BUT HOW SOME OF US CARRY OUR CHAINS AROUND WITH US, IN THE FORM OF LAPTOPS AND PHONES. — BENJAMIN NOYS

NOW THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER – AND ONE HAS NO EYE FOR THAT IN TIMES OF GREAT PERIL, AND ONLY BY A GREAT EFFORT EVEN IN TIMES WHEN DANGER IS THREATENING – IS THAT IN REALITY THE BURROW DOES PROVIDE A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF SECURITY, BUT BY NO MEANS ENOUGH, FOR IS ONE EVER FREE FROM ANXIETIES INSIDE IT? THESE ANXIETIES ARE DIFFERENT FROM ORDINARY ONES, PROUDER, RICHER IN CONTENT, OFTEN LONG REPRESSED, BUT IN THEIR DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS THEY ARE PERHAPS MUCH THE SAME AS THE ANXIETIES THAT EXISTENCE IN THE OUTER WORLD GIVES RISE TO. — FRANK KAFKA

Deserted beaches and dark forests are attractive to escapists. When narrow, crowded sidewalks give way to vast landscapes, an escape has found its beginning. Our mental landscapes clear up when a crowded social landscape clears out. The beach can appear sandboxed, and the ocean can turn into a pond – just add lots and lots of people. We go on vacation, as tourists, and are irritated by tourists. Our desirous exoticism seems to know no bounds, nor find any – what inner feelings of hoping to find an outside gives rise to these desires? Do we attempt these escapes only for a return to crowded city streets, where criminals, protesters, outcasts, thieves and the frictions of free thought roam?

## ESCAPE SOCIETY

It took two months for a 40-year-old Japanese to die from the consequences of his self-determined expanse. He was found in a wooden hut in the middle of a lonely moor in the region of Hokkaido, as well-preserved mummy and with a diary, containing a protocol of his 62-day surrender. The self-proclaimed death candidate has devoted his work to "all starving or fasting people and the adeerectors of the world." The motive for the unusual suicide: a radical withdrawal from neo-teocracy; consumption and above all: no more participating.

## ESCAPE WASTE

Where there is life, there is waste. What goes in comes out, as continuous transformation. There is never nothing at the start, just as something is always leftover, a restless remainder. Something always leaks out, sinks, recycles. Recycling is a remarkable practice, not because it is perfect or moral, as governance tries to tell us, but because it performs pure loss, negatio, the becoming of nothing. Waste is not inert matter, waiting to be discarded or upcycled by humans. Waste is alien matter, or queer matter that "mobilizes relations" (Hind). In these dark residues are forces resisting each other, relating you, relating us. Holy shit!



INTIMACY WILL BE THE NEW CODE WORD. THERE WILL BE NO 'AWAY' TOWARDS WHICH WE CAN THROW ANYTHING. (...) IT'S LIKE THE STORY OF ANANIS AND THE TAR BABY. THE HARDER HE TRIED TO PULL AWAY, THE MORE HE FINDS HIMSELF STUCK. — TIMOTHY MORTON

## ESCAPE INFRASTRUCTURE

Alongside the reconfiguration of subject positioning and subjective sensitivities in relation to a 'world out there' that was never really 'out there' at all, there is a transformation in what regards the cultures of technology and technological culture, as they become more ubiquitous, vascularised and always-on. These infrastructural aspects of technology create a new field of material and immaterial conditions and possibilities. Of course each of these nations has its own predatory nature. Fusser notes how, "We may be oppressed by culture on a higher level than we are by nature – do cave bears and hail storms oppress us more than the secret police and thermonuclear weapons?"



On December 3, 1999, in Monte Carlo, Monaco, the multimillionaire banker Ronald S. Lauder, along with one of his nurses, died of asphyxiation in a locked, bunker-like bathroom built into his penthouse. Early accounts said that two hooded intruders had penetrated the apartment, which was as solid as a fortress. The bizarre death made headlines everywhere and sent shock waves through the banking community, as well as through the principality of Monaco, probably the safest, most tightly controlled haven in the world for the very rich. At any moment during the catastrophe he might have saved himself, but he was reportedly so fearful of being murdered by the intruders he had been told were in his house that he refused to come out of the locked bathroom, in spite of the pleas of firemen and police.

## ESCAPE VIOLENCE

A panic room is useless if the house it's in is burning down. A panic room is like a sanctuary, a shelter, a hiding place, a medieval castle keep. Warlike bunkers, places where we attempt exit from things unsafe. These are the featured architectures of paranoia, places for self-concealment that we feel better knowing exist from both broadcasts are made. A fortified safe room must always, continuously be connected to its outside. The panic room gives way to panic. What are safe spaces if not a last resort? Self-imprisonment? A pure violence, against an impossible idea of security. Once we're in, will we ever want out?

MODERNITY WAS A WAY TO DIFFERENTIATE PAST AND FUTURE, NORTH AND SOUTH, PROGRESS AND REGRESS, RADICAL AND CONSERVATIVE, HUMANISM AND ANTI-HUMANISM. AT A TIME OF PROFUND ECOLOGICAL MUTATION, SUCH A COMPASS IS A MERE ILLUSION. WE NEED TO REORIENT OURSELVES WITHOUT OBTAINING MUCH ORIENTATION. — BRUNO LATOUR

Escapes from the productive efficiencies and industrial effectiveness of modern times can be exemplified through movements, both genuine and performative, relating to food (artisanal bread), social structure (communal living) and repair (maintenance over novelty and attempts at working, playing, resist and attending to senses like sight, sound and feel) over working on the outside of blackboards and with baffling, opaque machines.

## ESCAPE MODERNITY

What kind of exit could we, as moderns, propose from modernism? From the medievalists, an intent to perform historical bypass surgery. From postmodernism a plan and (largely derided) attempts at accelerating and modulating modernist tendencies across cultures and hemispheres. For most, modernity is "essential for us, and for this reason it is ultimately inaccessible to us" (Zelinski). Modernity is inescapable, a geographic fallacy expanding into realms and geographies unknown...

Wolf Shoal was a professor of architecture at the University of Texas, where he founded the Responsive Environments Laboratory. Initially focused on the automated creation of built environments, he eventually specialised in the construction of underwater structures using a method not unlike that used by living corals. Shoal was reported as having plans for his own Marine Resources Company to build up an island on Alice Shoal, a wholly submerged reef, located in the western Caribbean Sea, about 160 km southwest of Jamaica, independent of any existing nation. His method consisted essentially in the activation of a geological process, passing electric current through underwater mesh, causing minerals dissolved into seawater to precipitate. The material produced has since become commonly known as seacrete or bio-rock. Wolf claimed to have secured permission from the United States Coast Guard to build a fortified Navassa Island as a supply base. As reported by Erwin S. Strauss, however, this permission seems unlikely, and the actual fate of the island is unknown to all.

## ESCAPE TERRITORY

The sovereign state is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory. With the word "territory" we usually refer to the land and waters belonging to or under the jurisdiction of a sovereign state. It comes from "terra", "earth", "land", as in "territain", but it also resonates with the Latin word *terrene*, "to frighten"; a "territorium" is a combination of land and law, "a place from which people are warned off".

TERRITORY IS NO DOUBT A GEOGRAPHICAL NOTION, BUT IT'S FIRST OF ALL A POLITICAL CONCEPT. IT'S A POLITICAL AREA CONSTITUTED BY A COMMON WILL OF POWER. — MICHEL FOUCAULT

Pietro Gonella, in the first half of the 15th century, was a jester at the service of the marquis Obizzo III d'Este, Lord of Ferrara. However, at some point, because of some negligence in obeying rules or authority, he found himself expelled from the Duchy, and threatened with capital punishment, were he ever put his his feet back onto the Marquis' land. Without losing hope, nonetheless, Pietro devised a way to go back to the city. He went first to Bologna and filled a wheelbarrow with soil, then he travelled to Ferrara, and enter the walled city standing on a cart full of Bologna's earth. He claimed not to infringe in this way the notice, as his feet were not standing on the Marquis' land. Obizzo finally allowed Pietro to do as he pleased, recognizing a jester's wit.

## ESCAPE TECHNOLOGY

The 21st century has witnessed a proliferation of "institutions" and "institutions" in the form of alternate schools, para-academic and para-governmental organizations, publications and discursive forms. These alternatives are encouraging as they create parallel orientations that use the energies of reform in non-conformative, non-resistive ways. The historical contingency, scale and momentum of modern institutions of government, education and markets gives us no way out. But how might we create other options, possibilities, substitute and proxy that preserve and reserve the institution as a har-binger of connection, relation and co-responsibility?

## ESCAPE INSTITUTIONS

In the late 19th century, proto-social scientist Émile Durkheim famously described this new science, sociology as a science of "institutions, their genesis and their functioning". Institutions were made real, as real objects of analysis. What we must still work to make absent is any notion of a post-'sociality' that produces institutions, just as culture does not act surreptitiously behind our backs but is produced by us in each instance and interaction. The intricate and often fragile patterns of stabilising relationships that stabilise institutions (internal/external) are pervasive. They deeply affect individual behavior and inspire personal attachments. They are difficult entities to locate or describe categorically or simply. Institutions are the infrastructure of social contracts and behaviour, concretisations of social values, constitutive relationally through practices. Strategies for removing oneself from institutional hegemony, sovereignty or affordance through disengagement need to be replaced with better and sustained attempts to modulate, reconfigure and invent reconstituted institutional forms.

THE MOST IMPORTANT BRANCHES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WERE THE ONES OF CHAINS OF DYKES, AND FOLDERS, OR PUMPS AND MILLS, OF FLOOD AND MEANDERS. — BRUNO LATOUR

For nearly 30 years, India and Bangladesh have argued over control of New Moore, a tiny rock island in the Bay of Bengal. Both claimed the empty territory, which is about two miles long and 1.5 miles wide. No permanent structures occupied the land, but India sent paramilitary soldiers to its rocky shores in 1981 to host a national flag. Now, rising sea levels have resolved the dispute for both parties: the island is gone. New Moore has been completely submerged, confirmed by satellite imagery and sea patrols. The demarcation of the maritime boundary – and who controls the remaining islands – however, remains an open issue between the two south Asian neighbours, and the disappearance of the island does nothing to resolve it.

A State is a statement, declared in words, instantiation and performance of historical decree. It is immobile and static, the opposite of that which is variable and dynamic. Negotiations and settlements are what the state enacts, but its existence must remain unquestioned and unquestionable. It is the state that makes territories legible, that arranges populations and the land in ways that simplify functions of taxation, conscription and the prevention of the questioning of the state. The state is teleological, and like all tautologies, it is circular, cyclical and inescapable.

## ESCAPE STATE

"The Common People of England have begun, and gives Consent to Digge up!" The True Levellers – later also known as the Diggers – were a group of protestant radicals formed in 1649 in England, whose name derives from their attempts to farm on common land. The Diggers tried to reform the existing social order by literally "leveling" land. Believing in economic equality, they promoted an agrarian lifestyle and created small egalitarian rural communities, where they claimed the collective use of forests and lands, against the landowner's entitlement to private use. They envisioned an ecological interrelationship between humans and nature, and declared that "true freedom lies where a man receives his nourishment and preservation, and that is in the use of the earth". Subject to repeated attacks, the Digger communities in England existed only until 1650.

The changing course of the Danube, the most important international waterway in its continent, has left several parcels of (former) Serbian territory on the west bank of the river – which Serbia says should now rightly be Croatian. Croatia, however, rejects the Serbian interpretation of the parcel which is occupied by the Gornja Siga – as this area is referred to on some maps – is not Croatian. It was therefore *terra nullius*, a no man's land, until Yli Jeliciga – the first to spot this bizarre legal conundrum – seized the opportunity and on 13 April 2015 formed a new state in this territory – Liberland. "Free Republic of Liberland is a sovereign state located between Croatia and Serbia on the west bank of the Danube river." Its total area of approximately 7 km² is the nation's smallest sovereign state, after the Vatican and Monaco. "The motto of Liberland is 'To Live and Let Live' because Liberland prides itself on personal and economic freedom of its people, which is guaranteed by its Constitution, which significantly limits the power of politicians so they could not interfere too much in the freedom of the Liberland nation." The current human population of Gornja Siga is zero.

## ESCAPE GOVERNMENT

A Government is the governing power in a given place; governance is the "act or manner of governing" a territory. Both however come from the Latin *gubernāre*, "to steer", and the Greek *kubernáo*, "directing the movement of a vessel", "steer". The original context of the word is nautical. We are at sea.

The Seasteading Institute is a nonprofit funded in Silicon Valley begun 2008 by Paul Friedman (Milton Friedman's grandson) and venture capitalist Peter Thiel to build floating libertarian nation. They promote experiments and innovations in governance, they seek to enable seasteading communities – Floating Cities – which will allow the next generation of pioneers to peacefully test new ideas for government". The most successful – they hope – could then inspire change in governments around the world. A group of key people withdrew from society, escape from their governments, and take to the sea. Opening humanity's next frontier, however, doesn't seem to go further than the territorial waters of an existing nation. Historically, the Seasteading Institute has looked to international waters for the freedom to establish new nations and spur competitive governance from the outside. However, they are now seeking a host nation, as it is less expensive to engineer a seafared for shallow waters, it is easier for residents to travel to and from the seafared, and "a host nation... [would] provide a place for a floating city within the existing international legal framework, with the associated protections and responsibilities".

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STANDS OFFERING ANY KIND OF COMPROMISE. THEY PREFER PARTICIPATING IN SHUNNINGS ON WHICH TAKES ARE BASED. THEY PREVENT THE SOLDIERS FROM MARCHING WHILE HARSHING BANDITS AND DESERTERS. FOR THE STATE, MARSHES ARE NATURALLY ESSENTIALS. — FRANCO PARENTELLI



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